

(Continued from Third page.)

For the first time the conviction came to George that in order to be Washington one would need more than his uniform. Little by little this idea took possession of him. There was no sudden conversion; it was a slow process of imitation. At first he made no effort except to play the part when the occasion permitted him to wear the dress of Washington. He refrained from drinking to excess at such times; he told no big stories. Originally this abstinence may have been largely due to fear of ridicule, for others were quick to follow Simon Gardiner's lead. But eventually he played the part thoroughly for his own sake. He tried to think what Washington would have done in this or that event. Books furnished him with ideas of the great patriot's language and demeanor. He became noticeably courteous, especially to women, whenever he wore the uniform of the leader. Gradually the self-command he thus acquired produced its effect upon his daily life. He was Washington at all times; often stilted and ridiculous, no doubt, but on the whole a better and an honest man than he had been before. He schooled himself to tell the exact truth in the smallest as well as the greatest affair. At the time when I first saw him riding at the head of Rockport's parade, he was a man a good deal laughed at in a quiet way, but implicitly trusted by every person who had the sense to understand him. His home was a model; he prospered in his trade; he was the George Washington of Rockport.

At last the traitor came. I was 12 years old then and my present memory of the events is accurate. Mr. Green had relatives in Green's Landing, on Deer Isle, in Penobscot Bay. His ancestors had given the landing its name and it had given them little in return. Silas Green of the Landing was a young man with no money and meagre prospects. It came into the charitable heart of George Washington Green to take this young man into his own family and train him up in the painter's trade. Silas gladly accepted the offer, and for two years he wielded the brush under his kinsman's tuition. Then Silas began to complain that his earnings were insufficient. He quarreled with his benefactor and started into business for himself.

It seems incredible that this ingrate should have had support from the men of Rockport, but such is the fact. Jealousy of George Washington was at the bottom of it. His enemies saw a chance to strike at him by the agency of this young man. It happened that the Washington features which, in a general way, marked the family, were accentuated in Silas. There is no doubt that he looked far more like the immortal George than did his benefactor. Upon this resemblance a wicked plot was based. Its object was no less than the retirement of George Washington Green from his place at the head of the column in the Fourth of July parade, and the substitution of Silas.

I believe that I was the first person in Rockport, aside from the plotters themselves, to get a hint of their base designs. An incautious word in my presence gave me the clue, and made a counter-plotter of me in a second. Wrapped in an old piece of canvas in Hiram Leavitt's sail-loft, I subsequently heard the scheme discussed. Had I simply gone out into the town and told all about it, doubtless that would have stopped the mischief; but what boy would have done that? To work in secret, to conspire, is a boy's delight. I summoned my immediate cronies, and we organized a society called the Rockport Patriots, the object of which was the destruction of Silas Green's hopes. We met many times, surrounding our proceedings with deep mystery; but before we had decided whether to drown Silas, or simply to kidnap him and imprison him on a desolate island in the bay, the mask was thrown off by our opponents and the whole town was talking.

They had been exceedingly clever. By "packing" the committee on Fourth of July observances, they had secured, apparently, the success of their nefarious enterprise. With this committee rested the question who should lead the parade. They voted for Silas Green. Then arose one of those village wars which are so amusing to witness. The spirit of partisanship ran high. It seemed at first that all this might result in the abandonment of any celebration, but finally it became certain that there would be two parades. Two Washingtons would take the field on a single day.

Throughout the controversy the demeanor of the true Washington had been worthy of his prototype. Not a word of bitterness had escaped him. He had been inexpressibly pained, but he had borne it as the hero bore the winter at Valley Forge. He had argued against the idea of two parades; he had worked for peace in every honorable way; but at last, finding an unquestionable majority of the townspeople behind him, he had reluctantly consented to lead the cause he knew to be just.

Then came such preparation as Rockport had never seen before. Each separate parade would certainly be grander than the single one had ever been. Silas prepared himself for his triumph. He argued that he was certainly right, since his appointment was made by the properly constituted authorities.

"Uncle George is goin' dead again the law an' custom," said he. "So did the other George afore him," rejoined Simon Gardiner, then in his nineteenth year.

Meanwhile we boys plotted. We would have kidnapped Silas as surely as ever powder burned on the Fourth of July. He would have spent that day on Mark Island to a dead certainty if my father had not got wind of our scheme and made us promise to abandon it. That was a bitter disappointment.

(Concluded on Sixth Page.)

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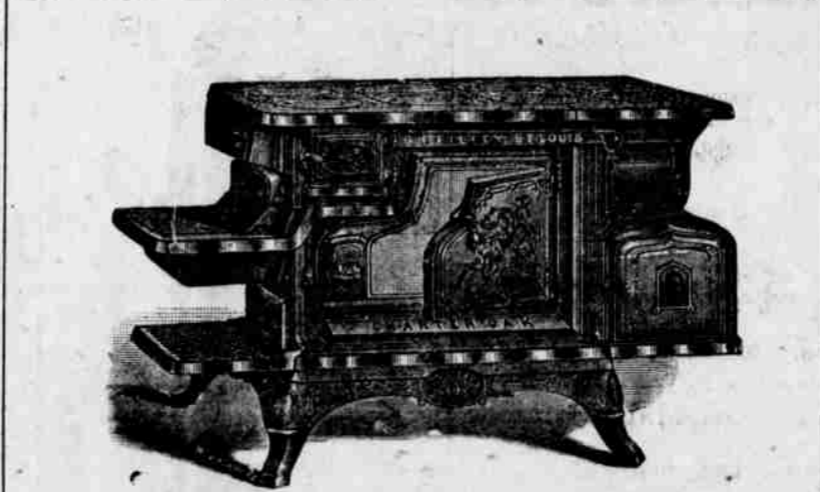
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